

December 8, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy,

As the 117th Congress comes to a close, we strongly urge Congress to pass the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. We applaud the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee for their work to craft this strong, bipartisan bill that makes important progress in helping communities across the country - especially tribal communities - address infrastructure challenges, especially in the face of worsening climate disasters. Furthermore, the bill makes critical changes to cost requirements that would ensure disadvantaged communities have access to technical assistance and resources. Its passage would not only result in significant infrastructure improvements, but also would further environmental justice and climate resiliency plans for communities across the nation by codifying provisions to make the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) incorporate climate and environmental justice into their decision making.

Specifically, the bill centers environmental justice and promotes more resilient infrastructure by:

- **Expanding protection for tribes:** Includes cost-sharing provisions for territories and tribes to avoid undue financial burden, directs all USACE districts to employ tribal liaisons, and creates an advisory committee for tribal and economically disadvantaged communities.
- **Providing technical assistance for all:** Assists with feasibility studies for economically disadvantaged groups who would not otherwise be able to do them.
- **Protecting victims of natural disasters:** Ensures that communities who have faced a natural disaster receive advance payment for rebuilding, rather than reimbursement, allowing more communities to participate in disaster recovery
- **Furthering climate resiliency goals:** Ensures that climate resiliency is built into every facet of project design and funding.
- **Promotes nature-based solutions:** Specifies the evaluation of natural methods to accomplish project goals.

We urge Congress to pass WRDA before the end of the year to ensure that every community has the ability to work with the USACE to address their infrastructure challenges, and to prepare

for and recover from natural disasters without being weighed down by financial hardship. Additionally, we strongly oppose adding the *Building American Energy Security Act* or any legislative language to the bill that would eliminate or “streamline” environmental reviews, diminish the ability of frontline communities to engage in federal permitting processes, or otherwise invest in the continued development of dirty fossil fuels that jeopardize the health of our families and the climate. We cannot let harmful permitting reform jeopardize this chance to ensure that USACE districts across the country incorporate climate resilience and environmental justice considerations into their water resource projects at every turn.

Sincerely,

Clean Water Action
Earthjustice
League of Conservation Voters
Natural Resources Defense Council

CC:

Senator Tom Carper, Chair, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
Senator Shelly Moore Capito, Ranking Member, Senate Environment and Public Works
Committee
Representative Peter DeFazio, Chair, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
Representative Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee